While not all of the Washington Service Corps (WSC) members serve in programs focused on disaster preparedness, response and recovery, members may be called upon to participate in disaster preparedness response and recovery efforts. This policy sets in place the protocol for member eligibility criteria, the nature of disaster deployments, and the WSC's expectations for performance upon selection. Any deployment would be within the state of Washington, unless specifically requested through our cooperative agreement with the Corporation for National and Community Service. All out-of-state deployments need prior approval for a member to travel outside the state of Washington. This is extremely critical when the deployment is requested at the project site level.

Upon request for assistance, the WSC will determine the number of members needed for deployment and what skills would be beneficial for the deployment. Consulting the WSC Member Deployment Spreadsheet, a query would be run determining which members would be most suitable for deployment. The Project Supervisor of those members (team-based, special programs and individual placements) would be contacted with details about the deployment situation (where, when, length of time of deployment, etc.). If the deployment would not adversely affect the service site, Project Supervisors would contact members who are eligible to deploy to discuss the deployment request.

Should there not be any specific skills requested, a general “call for deployment” would be issued to Project Supervisors and the members who are able and interested in deploying.

Eligibility Criteria:

- The Project Supervisor agrees to make the member available for training and possible deployment;
- the member understands the difficult conditions of deployment;
- the member is in physical condition appropriate for specified tasks;
- the member can deploy within 24 to 48 hours of confirmation of deployment status.

Conditions of Deployment:

It is important that project sites and their members understand that disaster deployments are considered hardship assignments. Members should not volunteer for this unless they understand that they are likely to face unfavorable conditions, which may include:

- Extreme weather conditions such as high heat and humidity; sustained exposure to freezing temperatures or unmitigated heat from direct sunlight; rain, snow or other forms of precipitation; lightning; and dangerous flooding situations.
- Possible exposure to infections and diseases. For example, West Nile virus; H1N1 (swine flu). Disaster responders should be current on their vaccinations.
- Potentially dangerous working situations such as handling broken glass and twisted metal, climbing on roofs, and wading through flood waters.
- Unfavorable living conditions. Responders often sleep on gymnasium floors, at campgrounds, in church halls, and in college dorms. There is also the possibility of there being no heat, air conditioning, or hot water in living spaces.
- Limited food choices. Often, responders are fed by the mobile operations of other responding voluntary organizations such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, or by churches in the community. The selection of food at these sites is extremely limited, so there is no guarantee that special dietary requirements can be reasonably accommodated. While vegetarian meals are becoming more accessible, many times, responders have had nothing else to eat except Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) that were provided by FEMA.
- Long work hours. In the days and weeks immediately following a disaster, much work must get done as quickly as possible. Responders may be required to work from sunrise to sunset to meet immediate needs. Workers in shelters may have to work 24 hours a day. While we usually try to ensure one day off a week, there are no guarantees.
- Chaotic work environment. Individuals deployed to disasters must understand that most deployments do not work out exactly as anticipated. A “hurry up and wait” scenario is possible – participants rush to deploy, only to spend several days on site with very little to do as the operation is organized. Also, responders may end up doing something totally different than what they had deployed to do. Additionally, there may prove to be no need for the responders once they arrive and they may be sent home immediately (expenses incurred will be reimbursed). Flexibility is the most important requirement for responding volunteers.

**Participation:**

During deployment, all WSC policies are in place and applicable. Depending on the size and duration of the deployment, a WSC staff person (or more) will be designated to be in charge of the mission. A Project Supervisor may be recruited to act as a second in charge. Staff and members should understand their roles and responsibilities during the disaster recovery mission. Staff are responsible for on the ground supervision of the members while they are serving on their assigned task and also at the camp or hotel where they are staying. Members should take their duties seriously and be held accountable for their service duties. Members should be willing to support their fellow team members and provide a positive atmosphere of support and tolerance; fully participating in service duties and team meetings.

A briefing would be held with members, supervisors and staff prior to deploying. At least one group meeting will be held for each week on deployment, with a conference call to the WSC Program Coordinator following the meeting. Upon return from deployment, time will be set aside for debriefing, reflection and counseling (if requested) prior to returning to service. Each deployed member is required to submit at least one Story of Service within one week after return from deployment.

Safety is the most important item to be emphasized during all projects and especially during disaster deployment missions. Members will be instructed on the proper use of Personal Protection Equipment, proper hydration, sun protection, fatigue and use of project equipment and tools. These safety topics will be addressed with members in regular safety briefings and by proper supervision from staff.
Should a project site request deployment of a member, prior approval needs to be obtained. The project supervisor will need to submit a request to the program coordinator that includes the following:

- where the member will be deployed
- how long the member will be gone
- proof of liability insurance coverage by the project site
- justification as to why the member is needed:
  - special skills the member possesses that warrants his/her assistance
  - what the member will be doing
  - how it relates to the member’s service at their site

The WSC Program Coordinator will then forward the request for deployment to the WSC Director of Programs and Operations. The Director or Director of Programs and Operations will approve or disapprove the request and send back to the WSC Program Coordinator for notification to project site.

Any member deployed without prior approval will not be able to count their hours on deployment as service hours or receive stipend pay for that time on WSC unauthorized leave.

For questions regarding this policy, project sites/sponsor organizations should contact their WSC Program Coordinator.